# THE STRANGEST SECRET

ORIGINAL VERSION

EARL NIGHTINGALE

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

# THE STRANGEST SECRET

Earl Nightingale

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction
The Strangest Secret
The Definition of Success
Your 30-Day Experiment
Bonus Book: How to Create Million Dollar Ideas
Creative Thinking Creates Our Life
The Gold Mine Between Your Ears
Test Your C.Q.
Characteristics of Creative People
Your Most Valuable Creative Tools
The Power In Asking Questions
New Ways to Think
Creative Problem Solving
The Brainstorm
Ready for Action
The Creative Person
The Challenge of Creativity
For More Earl Nightingale

# Introduction

The book you are about to read was written and recorded on a record in 1956 by Earl Nightingale. This message is the answer to the question that he had been searching for from the time he was about nine years old.

Earl Nightingale had been born in economically depressed times. As a child, because they were so poor, Earl desperately wanted to know why some people grew up to enjoy prosperity while others, like his family, struggled merely to survive.

Unable to find answers to his questions from grownups, Earl began reading everything he could, believing that someone, somewhere, had the answer.

Many years passed, and when Earl was 35 years old, he wrote and recorded this message. It was to be played one Saturday morning to a small group of salesmen during his absence.

When Earl returned, he learned that the message had made such a positive impact on the men they wanted copies to share with their friends and family.

Earl arranged with Columbia Records to duplicate the record to meet the many requests.

Much to Earl's surprise, in very little time, without any real advertising or marketing, over a million copies had been sold and he received a Gold Record.

Earl called the message *The Strangest Secret*. And this single recording was the seedling from which the entire Personal Development Industry grew.

And because Earl had discovered the true meaning of The Strangest Secret, which determines the outcome of one's life, he went from poverty to become one of the most highly recognized voices and names throughout the United States and from the West Indies to South Africa.

His daily radio program, Our Changing World, was the world's most widely sponsored radio program and was heard daily across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, the Bahamas, Guam, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, the Armed Forces Radio, and 30 countries overseas.

Since my husband's death in 1989, I have continually looked for new, effective ways to continue to share Earl's many messages of inspiration with the world. This eBook is one of those ways.

The Personal Development Industry is so vast today, and yet, people around the world attribute The Strangest Secret as being the one message that has most positively affected their lives.

As you read, you will notice how the statistics reflect those of the mid 1950's. But more than 50 years later, the message is as true and valuable as it was then.

I hope you enjoy the book, but more than that, I hope you put *The Strangest Secret* to work in your life.

Diana Nightingale

Back to top

## The Strangest Secret

I would like to tell you about the strangest secret in the world.

Not long ago Albert Schweitzer, the great doctor and Nobel Prize winner, was being interviewed in London and a reporter asked him, “Doctor what’s wrong with men today?”

The great doctor was silent for a moment and then he said, “Men simply don’t think.” And it’s about this that I want to talk with you.

We live today in a golden age. This is an era that man has looked forward to, dreamed of and worked hard for thousands of years.

But since it’s here, we pretty well take it for granted.

We, in America, are particularly fortunate to live in the richest land that ever existed on the face of the earth. A land of abundant opportunity for everyone, but do you know what happens?

Let’s take a hundred men who start even at the age of 25. Do you have any idea of what will happen to those men by the time they’re 65?

These one hundred men, who all start even at the age of 25, believe they are going to be successful. If you ask any one of these men if he wanted to be a success, he would tell you that he did and you would notice that he was eager towards life, that there was a certain sparkle to his eye and erectness to his courage and life seemed like a pretty interesting adventure to him.

But by the time they’re 65 one will be rich. Four will be financially independent. Five will still be working, 54 will be broke.

Now think a moment, out of the one hundred, only five make the grade. Why do so many fail? What has happened to the sparkle that was there when they were 25? What’s become of the dreams, the hopes, the plans and why is there such a large disparity between what these men intended to do and what they actually accomplished?

When we say about 5% achieve success, we have to define success, and here’s the definition. Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal. If a man is working towards a predetermined goal and knows where he is going, that man is a success. If he’s not doing that, he’s a failure. Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.

Rollo May, the distinguished psychiatrist, wrote a wonderful book called *Man’s Search for Himself*, and in this book he says the opposite of courage in our society is not cowardness, it is conformity. And there you have the trouble today.

It’s conformity. People acting like every one else without knowing why, without knowing where they’re going.

Now think of it. In America right now there are over 40 million people 65 years of age and over and about 13 million of these 40 million are broke. They’re dependent on someone else for life’s necessities.

Now we learn to read by the time we’re seven. We learn to make a living by the time we’re 25. Usually by that time, we’re not only making a living, we’re supporting a family. And yet, by the time we’re 65, we haven’t learned how to become financially independent in the richest land that has ever been known. Why? We conform. And the trouble is that we’re acting like the wrong percentage group -- the 95% who don’t succeed.

Now why do these people conform? Well, they don’t know really. These people believe that their lives are shaped by circumstances, by things that happened to them, by exterior forces; they’re outer directed people.

A survey was made one time that covered a lot of men, working men, and these men were asked this question. Why do you work? Why do you get up in the morning? 19 out of 20 had no idea. If you ask them, they’ll say everyone goes to work in the morning and that’s the reason why they do it because everyone else is doing it.

Back to top

## The Definition of Success

Now let's get back to our definition of success. Who succeeds? The only man who succeeds is the man who is progressively realizing a worthy ideal. He's the man who says, "I'm going to become this" and then begins to work towards that goal.

I'll tell you who the successful people are. A success is the school teacher who is teaching school because that's what she wanted to do. The success is the woman who is a wife and mother because she wanted to become a wife and mother and is doing a good job of it. The success is the man who runs the corner gas station, because that's what he wanted to do. The success is the successful salesman who wants to become a top-notch salesman and grow and build with his organization.

A success is anyone who is doing deliberately a predetermined job because that's what he decided to do deliberately. But only 1 out of 20 does that.

That's why today, there isn't really any competition, unless we make it for ourselves. Instead of competing all we have to do is create. Now for twenty years I looked for the key which would determine what would happen to a human being. Was there a key, I wanted to know, which would make the future a promise that we could foretell to a large extent? Was there a key to a person becoming successful if he only knew about it and knew how to use it?

Well, there is such a key and I've found it. Have you ever wondered why so many men work so hard and earnestly without ever achieving anything in particular and others don't seem to work hard and yet seem to get everything? They have a magic touch. You've heard them say that about someone. Everything he touches turns to gold. And have you ever noticed that a man who becomes successful tends to continue to be successful, and on the other hand have you noticed how a man who is a failure, tends to continue to fail. It's because of goals. Some of us have them, some don't.

People with goals succeed because they know where they're going. Now think of a ship leaving a harbor and think of it with a complete voyage mapped out and planned. The captain and crew know exactly where it's going and how long it will take. It has a definite goal. Nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of ten thousand it will get to where it started out to get.

Now let's take another ship, just like the first, only let's not put a crew on it or a captain of the helm. Let's give it no aiming point. No goal, no destiny. We just start the engine and let it go. I think you'll agree with me that if it gets out of the

harbor at all, it will either sink or wind up on some deserted beach, a derelict. It can't go any place because it has no destination, no guidance.

It's the same with a human being. Take the salesman for example. There is no other person in the world today with the future of a good salesman. Selling is the world's highest paid profession, if we're good at it and if we know where we're going. Every company needs top notched salesmen and they reward those men. The sky is the limit for them, but how many can you find.

Someone once said the human race is fixed, not to prevent the strong from winning but to prevent the weak from losing. The American economy today can be likened to a convoy in time of war. The entire economy is slowed down to protect its weakest link, just as the convoy had to go at the speed that would permit its slowest vessel to remain in formation.

That's why it's so easy to make a living today. It takes no particular brains or talent to make a living and support a family today. So we have a plateau of so called security, if that's what a person is looking for. But we do have to decide how high above this plateau we want to aim for.

Now let's get back to the strangest secret in the world -- the story that I wanted to tell you today. Why do men with goals succeed in life and men without them fail. Well let me tell you something, which if you really understand it, will alter your life immediately.

If you understand completely what I'm going to tell you from this moment on, your life will never be the same again. You will suddenly find that good luck just seems to be attracted to you. The things you want just seem to fall in line and from now on you won't have the problems, the worries, the knowing lump of anxiety that, perhaps, you have experienced before. Doubt, fear, well they'll be things of the past.

Here's the key to success and the key to failure: **We become what we think about.** Now let me say that again. We become what we think about. Throughout all history, the great wise men and teachers, philosophers and prophets have agreed with one another on many different things. It is only on this one point that they are in complete and unanimous agreement.

Listen to what Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman Emperor said. He said, "a man's life is what his thoughts make of it." Disraeli said this, "everything comes if a man would only wait. I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose, must accomplish it and that nothing can resist a will that will stake even existence for its fulfillment".

Ralph Waldo Emerson said this, “a man is what he thinks about all day long.” William James said, “the greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.” And he also said, “we need only in cold blood act as if the thing in question was real and it will become infallibly real by growing into such a connection with our life that it will become real. It will become so knit with habit and emotion, that our interest in it will be those which characterize belief.”

He also said this, “if you only care enough for a result, you will almost certainly ascertain it. If you wish to be rich, you will be rich. If you wish to be learned, you will be learned. If you wish to be good, you will good. Only you must then really wish these things and wish them exclusively and not wish at the same time a hundred other compatible things just as strongly.”

In the bible you read, in Mark 9:23, “if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Dr. Norman Vincent Peale said, “this is one of the greatest laws in the universe. Fervently do I wish I had discovered it as a very young man. It dawned upon me much later in life and I found it to be one of the greatest, if not my greatest discovery, outside of my relationship to God. And the great law briefly and simply stated is that if you think in negative terms, you’ll get negative results. If you’ll think in positive terms, you will achieve positive results. That is the simple fact which is at the basis of an astonishing law of prosperity and success. In three words, ‘believe and succeed’.”

William Shakespeare put it this way: “our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt.” George Bernerd Shaw said, “People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and if they can’t find them, make them.”

Well, it’s pretty apparent, isn’t it? And every person who discovered this for a while believed that he was the first one to work it out. We become what we think about.

Now it stands to reason that a person who is thinking about a concrete and worthwhile goal is going to reach it because that’s what he is thinking about and we become what we think about.

Conversely, the man who has no goal, who doesn’t know where he is going and whose thoughts must therefore be thoughts of confusion and anxiety and fear and worry, becomes what he thinks about. His life becomes one of frustration, fear, anxiety and worry and if he thinks about nothing, he becomes nothing.

Now how does it work? Why do we become what we think about? Well I'll tell you how it works as far as we know. Now, to do this, I want to tell you about a situation that parallels the human mind.

Suppose a farmer had some land and it's good, fertile land. Now the land gives the farmer a choice. He may plant in that land whatever he chooses, the land doesn't care. It's up to the farmer to make the decision. Now remember, we're comparing the human mind with the land. Because the mind, like the land, doesn't care what you plant in it. It will return what you plant, but it doesn't care what you plant.

Now let's say that the farmer has two seeds in his hand. One is a seed of corn, the other is night shade, a deadly poison. He digs two little holes in the earth and he plants both seeds; one corn, the other night shade. He covers up the holes, waters and takes care of the land and what will happen?

Invariably, the land will return what is planted. As it is written in the Bible, "as you sow, so shall you reap." Remember the land doesn't care. It will return poison in just as wonderful abundance as it will corn. So up comes the two plants: one corn, one poison.

Now the human mind is far more fertile, far more incredible and mysterious than the land, but it works the same way. It doesn't care what we plant. Success? Failure? A concrete worthwhile goal or confusion, misunderstanding, fear, anxiety and so on. But what we plant it will return to us.

You see, the human mind is the last great unexplored continent on the earth. It contains riches beyond our wildest dreams. It will return anything we want to plant.

Now, you might say, "but if that's true, why don't people use their minds more?" Well I think they've figured out an answer to that too. Our mind comes as standard equipment at birth. It's free and things that are given to us for nothing, we place little value on. Things that we pay money for, we value.

The paradox is that exactly the reverse is true. Everything that's really worthwhile in life came to us free: our mind, our soul, our body, our hopes, our dreams, our ambitions, our intelligence, our love of family and children and friends. All these priceless possessions are free, but the things that cost us money are actually very cheap and can be replaced at any time.

A good man can be completely wiped out and make another fortune. He can do that several times. Even if our home burns down we can rebuild it. But the things that we got for nothing, we can never replace. The human mind isn't used

merely because we take it for granted. Familiarity breeds contempt. It can do any kind of job we assign to it, but generally speaking, we use it for little jobs instead of big, important ones. Universities have proved that most of us are operating on about 10% of our abilities.

Decide now, what is it you want? Plant your goal in your mind. It's the most important decision you'll ever make in your entire life. Do you want to be an outstanding salesman, a better worker at your particular job? Do you want to go places in your company, in your community? All you've got to do is plant that seed in your mind. Care for it. Work steadily towards your goal and it will become a reality. It not only will, there's no way that it cannot.

You see, that is a law, like the laws of Sir Isaac Newton, the laws of gravity. If you get on top of a building and jump off you'll always go down, you'll never go up. And it's the same with all of the other laws of nature -- they always work, they're inflexible.

Think about your goal in a relaxed positive way. Picture yourself in your mind's eye as having already achieved this goal. See yourself doing the things that you will be doing when you've reached your goal.

Ours has been called the Phenobarbital Age, the age of ulcers and nervous breakdowns. At a time when medical research has raised us to a new plateau of good health and longevity, far too many of us worry ourselves into an early grave trying to cope with things in our own little, personal ways without learning a few great laws that will take care of everything for us. These things we bring on ourselves by our habitual way of thinking.

Every one of us is the sum total of his own thoughts. He is where he is because that is exactly where he really wants to be, whether he'll admit that or not. Each of us must live off the fruits of his thoughts in the future because what you think today and tomorrow, next month or next year, will mold your life and determine your future. You're guided by your mind.

I remember one time I was driving through Arizona and I saw one of those giant earth moving machines roaring along the road at about 35 mph with what looked like 20 tons of dirt in it. A tremendous incredible machine, and there was a little man perched way up on top with the wheel in his hands, guiding it. And as I drove along I was struck by the similarity of that machine to the human mind. Just suppose you're sitting at the controls of such a vast source of energy. Are you going to sit back and fold your arms and let it run itself into a ditch, or are you going to keep both hands firmly on the wheel and control and direct this

power to a specific, worthwhile purpose. It's up to you. You're in the driver's seat.

You see, the very law that gives us success is a two-edged sword. We must control our thinking. The same rule that can lead a man to a life of success, wealth, happiness and all the things that he has ever dreamed of for himself and for his family, that very same law can lead him into the gutter. It's all in how he uses it, for good or for bad. This is the strangest secret in the world.

Now why do I say it's strange and why do I call it a secret? Actually it isn't a secret at all. It was first promulgated by some of the earliest wise men and it appears again and again throughout the Bible. But very few people, who have learned it understand it. That's why it's strange and why, for some equally strange reason, it virtually remains a secret. I believe that you could go out and walk down the main street of your town and ask one man after another what the secret of success is, and you probably wouldn't run into one man in a month who could tell you.

Now this information is enormously valuable to us if we really understand it and apply it. It's valuable to us not only for our own lives but the lives of those around us -- our family, employees, associates and friends.

Life should be an exciting adventure. It should never be a bore. A man should live fully, be alive. He should be glad to get out of bed in the morning. He should be doing a job that he likes to do because he does it well.

One time I heard Grove Patterson make a speech, the editor and chief of the Toledo Daily Blade, and as he concluded his speech he said something that I've never forgotten. He said something like this, "my years in the newspaper business has convinced me of several things. Among them, that people are basically good and that we came from someplace and we're going someplace." So we should make our time here an exciting adventure.

The architect of the universe didn't build a stairway leading nowhere. And the greatest teacher of all, the carpenter from the plains of Galilee, gave us the secret time and time again, "as you believe so shall it be done unto you."

Back to top

## Your 30-Day Experiment

I've explained the strangest secret in the world and how it works. Now I want to explain how you can prove to yourself the enormous returns possible in your own life by putting this secret to a practical test. I want you to make a test that will last 30 days. Now it isn't going to be easy. If you'll give it a good try, it will completely change your life for the better.

Back in the 17th century, Sir Isaac Newton, the English mathematician and natural philosopher, gave us some natural laws of physics which apply as much to human beings as they do to the movement of bodies in the universe. Now one of these laws is that "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." Simply stated as it applies to you and me, it means we can achieve nothing without paying the price.

The results of your 30-day experiment will be in direct proportion to the effort you put forth. To be a doctor you must pay the price of long years of difficult study. To be successful in selling -- and remember that each of us succeeds to the extent of his ability to sale -- selling our families on our ideas, selling education in schools, selling our children on the advantages of living the good and honest life, selling our associates and employees on the importance of being exceptional people, to, of course, to the profession of selling itself.

But to be successful in selling our way to the good life, we must be willing to pay the price. Now what is that price? Well, it's many things. First, it's understanding emotionally, as well as intelligently, that we literally become what we think about -- that we must control our thoughts if we are to control our lives. It's understanding fully that as you sow, so shall you reap.

Secondly, it's cutting away all the fetters from the mind and permitting it to soar as it was divinely designed to do. It's the realization that your limitations are self-imposed and that the opportunities for you today are enormous beyond belief. It's rising above narrow-minded pettiness and prejudice.

Thirdly, to use all your courage to force yourself to think positively on your own problem:

• to set a definite and clearly defined goal for yourself,

• to let your marvelous mind think about your goals from all possible angles,

• to let your imagination speculate freely upon many different possible solutions,

• to refuse to believe there are any circumstances sufficiently strong to defeat you in the accomplishment of your purpose,

• to act promptly and decisively when your course is clear and to keep constantly aware of the fact that you are, at this moment, standing in the middle of your own acre of diamonds, as Russell Cromwell used to point out.

Fourth, save at least 10 percent of what you earn.

It's also remembering that, no matter what your present job, it has enormous possibilities if you're willing to pay the price.

Now let's just go over the important points in the price teach of us must pay to achieve the wonderful that can be ours. It is, of course, worth any price.

One, you will become what you think about.

Two, remember the word imagination. Let your mind soar.

Three, courage -- concentrate on your goal everyday.

Four, save 10 percent of what you earn, and ACTION! Ideas are worthless unless we act on them.

Now I'll try to outline the 30-day test I want you to make. Keep in mind that you have nothing to lose by making this test and everything that you could possibly want, to gain.

There are two things that may be said of everyone: each of us wants something and each of us is afraid of something. I want you to write on a card what it is you want more than anything else. It may be more money. Perhaps you would like to double your income or make a specific amount of money. It may be a beautiful home. It may be success at your job. It may be a particular position in life. It could be a more harmonious family. Each of us want something.

Write down on your card, specifically, what it is that you want. Make sure it is a single goal and clearly defined. You need not show it to anyone, but carry it with you so that you can look at it several times a day.

Think about it in a cheerful, relaxed, positive way each morning when you get up and immediately you have something to work for, something to get out of bed for, something to live for. Look at it every chance you get during the day and just before going to bed at night. As you look at it, remember you must become what you think about and since you're thinking about your goal, you realize that soon it will be yours. In fact, it's yours, really, the moment you write it down and begin to think about it.

Look at the abundance all around you as you go about your daily business. You have as much right to this abundance as any other living creature. It's yours for the asking.

Now we come to the difficult part. Difficult, because it means the formation of what is probably a brand new habit and new habits are not easily formed. Once formed however, it will follow you for the rest of your life.

Stop thinking about what it is you fear. Each time a fearful or negative thought comes into your consciousness, replace it with a mental picture of your positive and worthwhile goal. There will come times when you will feel like giving up. It's easier for a human being to think negatively than positively, that's why only 5 percent are successful. You must begin now to place yourself in that group.

For 30 days you must take control of your mind. It will think only about what you permit it to think. Each day, for this 30 day test, do more than you have to do. In addition to maintaining a cheerful positive outlook, give of yourself more than you've ever done before. Do this knowing that your returns in life must be in direct proportion to what you give.

The moment you decide on a goal to work towards you are immediately a successful person. You are then in that rare and successful category of people who know where they're going. Out of every 100 people, you belong to the top five.

Don't concern yourself too much with how you're going to achieve your goal. Leave that completely to a power greater than yourself. All you have to do is know WHERE you're going. The answers will come to you of their own accord. Remember these words from the Sermon on the Mount and remember them well. Keep them constantly before you this month of your test. "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." It's as marvelous and simple as that.

In fact, it's so simple, that in our similarly complicated world, it's difficult for an adult to understand that all he needs is a purpose and faith. For 30 days, do your best. If you're a salesman go at it as you've never done before, not in hectic fashion but with a calm cheerful assurance that time well spent will give you the abundance in return that you deserve and want. If you're a homemaker, devote your 30-day test to complete giving of yourself, without thinking about receiving anything in return, and you'll be amazed at the difference it makes in your life.

No matter what your job, do it as you've never done it before for 30 days and, if you've kept your goal before you everyday, you will wonder and marvel at this new life that you've found.

Dorothea Brande, outstanding editor and writer, discovered it for herself and tells about it in her fine book, *Wake up and Live*. Her entire philosophy is reduced to the words “act as though it were impossible to fail.” She made her own test with sincerity and faith and her entire life was changed to one of overwhelming success.

Now you make your test for 30 full days. Don’t start your test until you’ve made up your mind to stick with it. You see, by being persistent you’re demonstrating faith. Persistence is simply another word for faith. If you didn’t have faith, you would never persist. If you should fail during your first 30 days, by that I mean suddenly finding yourself overwhelmed by negative thoughts, you’ve got to start over again from that point and go 30 more days. Gradually your new habit will form, until you find yourself one of that wonderful minority to whom virtually nothing is impossible.

Don’t forget the card. It is vitally important as you begin this new way of living. On one side of the card write your goal, whatever it might be. On the other side, write the words we’ve quoted from the Sermon on the Mount, “ask and it shall be giveth, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

In your spare time during your test period read books that will help you. Inspirational books like the Bible, Dorothea Brande’s *Wake up and Live*, *The Magic of Believing* by Claud Bristol, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill and other books that instruct and inspire. Nothing great was ever accomplished without inspiration.

See that during these crucial first 30 days your own inspiration is kept at a peak. Above all, don’t worry. Worry brings fear and fear is crippling. The only thing that can cause you to worry during your test is trying to do it all yourself. Know that all you have to do is hold your goal before you. Everything else will take care of itself.

Remember also to keep calm and cheerful -- calm and cheerful. Don’t let petty things annoy you and get you off course. Now, since making this test is difficult, some may say why should I bother? Well, look at the alternative. No one wants to be a failure. No one really wants to be a mediocre individual. No one wants a life constantly filled with worry, fear and frustration. Therefore, remember that you must reap that which you sow. If you sow negative thoughts your life will be filled with negative things. If you sow positive thoughts, your life will be cheerful, successful and positive.

Now gradually, you have a tendency to forget what you’ve read in this book. Read it often. Keep reminding yourself of what you must do to form this new

habit. Gather your whole family about and talk about what has been written here at regular intervals.

You know, most men will tell you that they want to make money without understanding the law. The only people who make money work in the mint. The rest of us must earn money. This is what causes those who keep looking for something for nothing or a free ride to fail in life. The only way to earn money is by providing people with services or products which are needed and useful. We exchange our product or services for the other man's money. Therefore, the law is that our financial return will be in direct proposition to our service.

Success is not the result of making money. Making money is the result of success and success is in direct proposition to our service. Most people have this law backwards. They believe that you're successful if you earn a lot of money. The truth is, that you can only earn money after you're successful.

It's like the story of the man who sat in front of a stove and said to it, "give me heat and then I'll add the wood." How many men and women do you know, or do you suppose are out there today, who take the same attitude towards life. There are millions.

We've got to put the fuel in before we can expect heat. Likewise, we've got to be of service first before we can expect money. Don't concern yourself with the money. Be of service. Build. Work. Dream. Create. Do this and you'll find that there is no limit to the prosperity and abundance that will come to you.

Prosperity is founded upon a law of mutual exchange. Any person who contributes to prosperity must prosper, in turn, himself. Sometimes the return will not come from those you serve, but it must come to you from someplace, for that is the law.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. As you go daily through your 30-day test period, remember, that your success will always be measured by the quality and quantity of service you render and money is a yardstick for measuring this service. No man can get rich himself unless he enriches others.

There are no exceptions to a law. You can drive down any street in America and, from your car, estimate the service that is being rendered by the people living on that street. Have you ever thought of this yardstick before? It's interesting. Some, like ministers and priests and other devoted people, measure their returns in the realm of the spiritual, but again, their returns are equal to their service.

Once this law is fully understood, any thinking person can tell his own fortune. If he wants more, he must be of more service to those from whom he receives his return. If he wants less, he has only to reduce his service. This is the price you must pay for what you want.

If you believe you can enrich yourself by diluting others, you can only end by diluting yourself. Just as surely as you breath, you'll get back what you put out. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking you can avert this. It's impossible. The prisons and streets where the lonely walk are full of people who tried to make new laws just for themselves. We may avoid the laws of man, but there are greater laws that cannot be broken.

An outstanding medical doctor recently pointed out six steps that will help you realize success:

1) Set yourself a definite goal.

2) Quit running yourself down.

3) Stop thinking of all the reasons why you can't be successful and instead, think of all the reasons why you can.

4) Trace your attitudes back to your childhood and try to discover where you first got the idea you couldn't be a success, if that's the way you've been thinking.

5) Change the image you have of yourself by writing out a description of the person you would like to be.

6) Act the part of the successful person you have decided to become.

The doctor who wrote those words is a noted West Coast psychiatrist, David Harold Fink, M.D.

Do what all the experts since the dawn of recorded history have told you you must do -- pay the price by becoming the person you want to become. It's not nearly as difficult as living unsuccessfully.

Make your 30-day test, then repeat it, then repeat it again. Each time it will become more a part of you until you wonder how you could ever have lived any other way.

Live this new way and the flood gates of abundance will open and pour over you more riches than you may have dreamed existed. Money, yes, lots of it, but what's more important you'll have peace. You'll be in that wonderful minority who lead calm, cheerful successful lives. Start today. You have nothing to lose. But you have a life to win.

Back to top

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# HOW TO CREATE MILLION DOLLAR IDEAS

By Earl Nightingale

## Creative Thinking Creates Our Life

There are two ways in which we are paid for what we do. One is tangible, in the form of money, and the other is intangible, but just as important. To many, it's more important.

This latter form of payment comes in the form of inner-satisfaction, in the form of joy as the result of accomplishment. It also comes in the form of satisfaction in position and the standing it gives us.

So each of us is paid in these two ways, money and satisfaction, and there's a very simple way to increase both of these forms of income.

You may wonder how I can say that I can tell you of a simple way to increase your income, from the standpoint of money as well as inner-satisfaction. Yet, I can and you'll be able to see and spend the results.

First, I want you to understand and believe completely the great law which lies as the foundation of all life, business and personal. It is "our rewards in life will be in exact proportion to our service."

The more you think about this and observe people and businesses in their true light, the more you'll see the undeniable truth of it.

Now, try as best you can to estimate the proportion of your total ability you have been giving to your work. I don't think anyone gives 100%. I don't think it's possible to give 100% day in and day out, I know I don't. But, estimate what you consider to be the percentage of 100% you have been giving to your work.

Would you say it's been 30%? 50%? Anyway, try to decide.

Now, since your rewards will be in exact proportion to your service, you can increase your income, both financially and from an inner-satisfaction standpoint, simply by narrowing the distance between what you have been giving to your work, and the 100% of what you maybe said you could give under ideal conditions.

You don't have to ask for a raise. The income will appear of its own accord and in the right time. You may want to question this, but try to take my word for it.

Now, the second point I want to make is this. If you will begin to do your work better, better than you've ever done before, you will immediately begin to receive incalculably more inner-satisfaction.

You'll also find that what may have been a boring or uninteresting job will take on new meaning and interest.

No matter what it is you do during the working day, try, in every case, to do a little more than you have to, more than you're being paid for, because, unless you do more than you're being paid for now, you can't hope for or justify an increase in pay.

And the third point I want to make is this. Each of us is interdependent. Other people pay our salaries, buy our homes, cloth, feed and educate our children; therefore, we depend upon others for our very lives, just as they must depend upon us.

If we expect others to give us excellent service and fine products for the money we spend, doesn't it make good sense that we should treat them the same way?

Every hour spent at our work should be spent in the attempt to give the best of which we are capable; a baker's dozen for the money our company's customers spend for our products and services, and with which our salaries are paid.

A person who tries to get the maximum return for the minimum of effort is only kidding himself. Sooner or later the scales will balance. They must, for that is the law, whether we like it or not.

This kind of individual actually shrinks as a person, as a human being and he has no real place in a dynamic and swiftly changing world.

The fourth point is to try each day to find some way in which the work you're doing can be improved. Here again, you're guaranteeing an increase in your income in both categories.

We all know the cynical type of individual who will laugh at this. I know them, you know them. But I don't know one who could be said to be doing well, do you?

I know lots of men and women who are at the top of their fields, who live their lives every day in the way I have suggested.

Rather than go along with someone who's never proved in his own life that he knows what he's talking about, I'd prefer to believe the one who said "as ye sow, so shall you reap." I feel, as I'm sure you do, that he was more qualified to speak than the know-it-all who's behind in his installment payments.

Anyway, it's worth a test. If you will follow my suggestions for the next year, you'll be a different person, living a rich, rewarding and meaningful life.

Four things, all of them simple:

1) Remember that our rewards in life will be in exact proportion to our service.

2) By giving your work a larger percentage of your capabilities and talents, you will, you must, increase your income substantially.

3) Since our lives depend on others, treat others in every facet of your life exactly as you want others to treat you. If you expect others to give you excellent products and services for the money you and your family spend, then you should make certain that your job is handled as excellently as it is possible for you, since it is the money of others which pays your salary.

4) Try to find some way, every day, in which your work can be improved.

And above all, know your boss, he's the customer. Treat him with the respect, care, courtesy and good humor he deserves. Remember, he pays all of your bills every month. He will buy everything you will ever own. He may be coarse, crude, ignorant, selfish, conniving and a thorough going savage, he often will be.

Here, it is more important than ever that you treat him with all the care and attention you can muster. If you don't, and if you permit his attitude to affect yours, you're admitting that he's the stronger person.

If you respond the way he conducts himself, you're admitting you are no better than he is.

But most people are nice people. They're people like you and me who want to be liked, who want to get along, who want to be friends. They have problems and sorrows of their own, about which we're not aware, and they have bad days and disappointments.

Make sure that the time there with you is a high spot in their day and that they'll want to come back, not just because of your company but because of you.

If you will do these things for a year, you'll be surprised and delighted and you'll find you wouldn't live any other way for the world. If you're already living this way, you know what I mean.

Back to top

## The Gold Mine Between Your Ears

Have you ever given much thought to the value of ideas? From less than worthless, they run the gamut all the way into the hundreds of billions of dollars, from the wheel to the zipper, fire to the home permanent, the bow and arrow to the H-Bomb, electricity to the Iron Engine, each has been drawn from that bottomless, richest of all minds, the brain of man.

Everything you and I will ever have will come to us as the result of the way we use our minds, the one thing we possess that makes us different from all other creatures.

And the highest function of which our minds are capable is to think creatively. This is the kind of thinking that puts a fresh, new face on the world and all of our progress has come, now comes, and will always come as a result of creative thinking, from using our brains creatively.

But what is a brain? Well, it's a priceless resource that is given free to each human being at birth. It's as though the Creator said, "Here you are. You now have a copy of the creative agent that produced the plays of Shakespeare, bridged San Francisco Bay, and harnessed the energy and fire of the sun. I put it into your keeping for the span of your life. Do with it what you will."

A British neurophysicist has said that if we would have tried to approximate electronically an average human brain, it would cost three billion, billion dollars; that's the number 3 followed by 18 ciphers and you and I each own one.

Yes, you have a goldmine between your ears, your mind, your imagination. But, for most of us owning this great of all earthly possession is like owning some great complex Chinese puzzle containing, at its heart, a jewel of great value.

We have to find a secret key that will enable us to unlock the puzzle's treasure. Do you realize that nothing has yet been done perfectly? Everything in the world remains to be done or done over.

A major magazine recently reported that one out of every four products advertised in a particular issue was little more than an idea or a project in experimental laboratories ten years ago.

Today, more money is spent for research and development in a single year than was spent during the first 150 years of our nation's history. No one product has ever been manufactured, distributed, advertised, or sold efficiently as it might be and someday will be.

There isn’t, in all the world, a perfectly managed business, organization, institution, or government. The greatest picture hasn’t yet been painted. They ideal labor contract is yet unwritten. The best way to train salesmen, an easy way to stay slim, something to prevent baldness, a better mousetrap, all of these problems are still unsolved.

Physics, mathematics, and chemistry are still being revised. Psychology, sociology, and economics await another Darwin. Nothing is known completely and positively. Nothing has been done finally and right. Everything changes.

So, the world waits and then moves forward in surges as here a man and there a woman makes a fresh and daring discovery or proposes some bold new ideas.

And, most of these contributions to social and scientific progress come from creative individuals who have the courage and strength who challenge and break the bonds of conventional routine average thinking.

Yes, in this swift moving world, there’s tremendous opportunity for the men and women who use more of their total brain power. So, use your mind to think about the things which need to be done or done over, starting right where you are today.

Your brain is always ready for instant use. It thrives on exercise. How about giving it some right now? The best way to exercise your brain is to ask yourself questions. So, try these.

1) How can I improve myself so that I can become a better person?

2) How can I get along better with my customers, colleagues, friends, family?

3) What can I do to increase my value and advance faster in my organization?

4) How can I come up with new ideas for advancing my profession or improving the business I’m in?

Think about how you can create something in your work, in your life. Remember, nothing is done. Nothing is final and complete. You’ve done important and significant things in the past and you can do more if you will use more of your full brainpower now and in the years ahead.

Back to top

## Test Your C.Q.

It's been established that creative people are intelligent. But, conversely, intelligent people are not always creative. If you're typical you're only using about a fraction of your creative power. The objective is to increase your ability to use it. You're probably far more creative than you think.

Like most of us, you've perhaps had, at one time or another, a test to determine your IQ, your intelligence quotient. But, I doubt whether you've ever had a test to determine your creativity quotient, your CQ. Please get a piece of paper and a pencil. In fact, I recommend you always have paper and pencil ready. You'll find they're aids to creative thinking.

Please answer each of these 16 questions with yes or no, whichever honestly describes you best.

1) Do you seek out and jot down ides while listening to a speaker, chatting with someone, traveling, or just waiting in a reception room?

2) Do you take prompt and positive action on your better ideas? Do you do something with them?

3) Do you make it a daily habit to really use your eyes? Do you look at things carefully, thoughtfully? Do you absorb while you observe?

4) Do you ever ask yourself questions like these? How can I improve myself? How can I be more effective in my work? How can I help make my community a better place in which to live?

5) Have you ever written down your specific personal and business goals?

6) Do you spend some time each day purposefully reading or listening to others?

7) Do you make a steady effort to widen your interests and friendships? For example, do you read books and magazines outside of your field? Do you make new friends by taking an active role in church and civic groups?

8) Do you welcome ideas from everywhere? That is, do you encourage family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to share their thoughts with you?

9) Do you always try to understand something fully before you pass judgment?

10) Do you find yourself destructively discontented with the things around you? For example, do you often say to yourself there must be a better way to do this? Or, how can I improve this?

11) Do you pick a time and place to think each day? No one has more time than you have. Each person is given 24 hours a day. Do you use any of this time for

creative thinking or for just plain thinking?

12) Do you ever give away your ideas, ideas you believe might help someone?

13) Do you ever combine ideas or build big ideas from little ones? Do you ever adapt or associate ideas or modify, rearrange, or reverse the ideas you have?

14) Do you keep yourself in good mental and physical health, keep a bright outlook, and keep fit?

15) Do you consciously ask questions that require an explanatory answer rather than a simple yes or no? For example, do you try to ask questions which begin with these conversation starters who, what, when, where, why, which, how, and if?

16) What about your overall attitude toward life? Do you expect the best and do you constantly search for it?

All right, that completes the test. Now, please add up all your yes answers. If you have between 11 and 16 yes answers, you have a positive attitude and many of the tools for creative thinking. You are well on your way to a high CQ.

If you have between six and ten yes answers, you've started up the creative thinking road but you still have a ways to go.

I hope you did well on the test. If you didn't, don't worry. Your creative potential can be increased quickly and effectively by studying the principals you'll learn in this book and by conscientiously practicing the techniques of creative thinking.

Back to top

## Characteristics of Creative People

Our studies show that certain characteristics are almost always present in the creative individual. And, what are these characteristics? Well, here's a list of 25 of them.

And no one man or woman has all of the traits here. But the really creative people, the Socrates, da Vincis, Shakespeares, Edisons, Einsteins, Schweitzers, and all the others who led us to where we are today, have had most of the following characteristics. So check yourself.

1) Drive, the desire to work hard and long.

2) Courage, tenacity of purpose, the mental and moral strength to venture and persevere.

3) Goals, knowing what they wanted and going after it.

4) Knowledge, a thirst for knowledge, they knew their fields. They constantly boned up on them.

5) Good health, they kept physically and mentally fit. They exercised their bodies and, of course, their minds.

6) Honesty, they were frank, forthright, honorable. They had integrity and they were, above all, intellectually honest.

7) Optimism, the great creative people were usually optimistic and positive. They believed in people and they were cheerfully reasonable trying hard to be part of the solution to a problem, not part of the problem.

8) And judgment, they exercised judgment. They searched for facts, evaluated them, tried always to understand first, then judge.

9) Enthusiasm, they were enthusiastic, they were vital, they had a zest for life. They lived life fully.

10) They were chance takers. They didn't fear failure. They knew failure is often a stepping stone to success.

11) They were dynamic. They were energetic, always on the move.

12) Enterprising, they courageously took on jobs others didn't want or couldn't do. They were never afraid to try the unknown. They were opportunity seekers.

13) They were persuasive. They knew how to sell. They knew what motivates people. They inspired action and backed it up with reason and sound arguments.

14) They were outgoing. They made friends easily and they were easy on their friends. They encouraged people and ideas to grow in their presence.

15) They were good communicators. They had verbal skill and competence. They spoke fluently and interestingly.

16) They were perceptive. Their gateways to the mind were always wide open. Their senses were highly tuned to life around them. They were quick, acute, and sensitive. Their mental radar was always on.

17) They were both patient and impatient. Patient with others most of the time but always impatient with themselves believing they could and should be doing more and doing it better.

18) And, adaptable, they were resilient not ridged in their thinking. They were intelligent and flexible, adjusting quickly to changing situations.

19) They were perfectionists, always striving for the highest possible degree of excellence. They would not settle for mediocrity, particularly in themselves. They tried to be tolerant with others but others knew they insisted upon excellence.

20) They had a sense of humor. They saw the lighter side of life. They laughed easily, enjoyed a good story, often at their own expense.

21) They were versatile. They were able to do many things and do them well.

22) They were curious, inquisitive, always asking why. They knew that questions are the creative act of intelligence.

23) Individualistic, they were purposely independent. They did things the way they believe they should be done.

24) They were both realists and idealists occupied by reality and guided by ideals.

25) And, of course they were imaginative. They knew how to imagineer. They knew how to think in new combinations. They were able to conceive new relationships because of their curiosity and their habit of thinking outside the boundaries of conformity. They thought imaginatively. They judged wisely. And, they got their best ideas into action.

Well, those are 25 of the characteristics found in the most creative people. And again, let me stress that few creative people have all of these traits. Yet, every creative person seems to have many of them in varying degrees.

Each of these characteristics, one at a time, can be fashioned into a solid habit. And, together, they can become a living philosophy, a creative way of life.

You already have many of these traits. My objective here is to encourage you to bring them out, spotlight them, polish them, hone them, and use them in your daily life.

And here's how you're going to start making these creative characteristics a part of your life right now. Take 25 white index cards and write each of the characteristics on a card, a different one on each card. Spread the cards in front of you, study each one, and think negatively. That's right, think negatively.

Take the card which lists your weakest creative characteristic and put it aside. Take another card listing your next weakest trait and so on until you've got a stack of 25 cards weakest traits on top, strongest on the bottom.

Start today and work on weak trait number one. Work on it diligently for one week. Make it a part of your life. Next week, start on weak trait number two. Keep going. Work on all 25 characteristics one at a time. Soon, all 25 will be a living part of you. You'll have studied, worked on, and put into action 25 different creative characteristics.

If you do this faithfully, you'll be a far more creative person. You'll be more interesting, more valuable, and perhaps more uncomfortable. That is, you'll start to realize the scope, the depth, and breadth of your creative power.

You'll see new horizons, new ways to solve problems, new ways to create, build, invent, and improve. Even more important, you'll begin to work and live closer to the highest level of your mind power to realize fulfillment of your own potential.

Back to top

## Your Most Valuable Creative Tools

Not long ago, I had someone say if only each of us had one of those new high-speed computers hooked up in his head, he'd be much better off. Well, whoever made that statement, either knew very little about computers, or, didn't realize what kind of potential he already has between his ears.

We're really much better off just the way we are right now. The human brain is probably the only thing in existence that can't be improved upon except, perhaps, by the slow passage of centuries.

The computer has been called a high-speed moron. That is to say that, although the modern computer is among the most sophisticated electronic systems yet devised, it's still severely limited in its abilities and it falls far short of the human brain.

We have enormous mental powers and the intelligence to explore and utilize them. The computer can only carry out orders which are fed into it. It can only be fed mathematical calculations and make mechanical comparisons. It can't make valued judgments.

True, computers whiz through reams of problems almost instantaneously saving us days even months of laborious figuring. Yet, the computer is only as good as the person who's programming it.

Experts tell us that the brain can capture, store, recall and program more than 600 bits of information per second. In the course of a lifetime, this is an enormous total, billions and billions of facts and impressions. On the other hand, our latest computers can handle only a few million characters in their memory banks.

A comparison between us and those electronic marvels finally boils down to this. We can think, the machines cannot. And that's a really significant difference.

Now, let's take a careful look at the brain. It has four basic powers.

One: The power to absorb, the ability to take in information, knowledge. We do this by looking, listening, touching, tasting, and smelling, by using all five of our senses and keeping the gateways of our mind always open.

Number Two: The power of retention, the capacity to retain knowledge and recall it. Our brains are like endless rows of filing cabinets with relatively few packed file drawers full of all sorts of information. There's always much room for more.

Three: The power of judgment and logical thought. The more facts we feed our brain, the more able it is to reason and judge intelligently.

And Four: The power of imagination, the ability to think creatively.

With the first two powers, absorption and retention, we gather the raw material with which to think. And, with the attitude, judgment, and imagination we evaluate old ideas and create new ones.

Put another way, we have four switches in our minds. Turn on switch number one and we gather information. Switch number two snaps on our retentive powers. We retain and recall the facts that come in through the first switch.

Number three clicks on our judgment. When it's on all the way, we think logically.

And number four is the switch for imagination. With most people, this is the one that collects the must rust. When we were children, we used the imagination switch all the time fighting imaginary bandits and flying make believe airplanes. This is pure imagination.

But, as we grow older, we're seldom encouraged to use the imaginative power we spent our childhood cultivating. Instead, we're taught to conform, to take no chances, to play it safe, to follow the crowd. So, switch number four soon gets rusty and we find it difficult to turn it back on when we get older.

The other thing is, as we grew up, people had a way of making us feel uncomfortable when they saw us using imagination. When we came up with new ideas they were often greeted with smears or sarcastic laughter or comments such as that's a crazy idea. It won't work. It's never been done before, or we always do it this way and so on.

These are idea killers. And, I'm sure you've heard them and many, many more. They stifle creativity. Sometimes, too often really, we use them on others. But even worse, we use them on ourselves. We actually kill our own ideas before they're given a chance to prove themselves one way or the other.

Now, in order to combat this type of negative behavior, here are a few thoughts you might like to remember.

One: Ideas can come from anyone, anywhere, at anytime. Ideas, like babies, don't pick their parents. So, be a sponge for ideas.

Two: Ideas, particularly in their early stages of development, demand care and attention. They can be crushed all too easily.

And three, ideas need encouragement or rather people need to be encouraged to think up ideas and communicate them to us. Try never to be guilty of uttering idea killers. You can never tell when or where you'll find a good idea.

So, make it a point to create a receptive atmosphere around you. Let other people know you're interested in them and in what they have on their minds.

Treat your ideas and the ideas of others with extreme care. Let people and their ideas grow in your presence. When you do, you're using your four brain powers the way they were meant to be used. You're thinking creatively.

Use your wonderful mind to its fullest. It won't wear out. Our brains thrive on exercise. It might not be a bad idea to try out all four of your creative switches today. I mean the absorption, retention, judgment, and imagination powers we've been talking about.

This evening, for example, you might pick a subject that's important to you. Read about it, or talk with someone who's well informed about it. Absorb all you can. Recall from your memory all the information it contains on this subject. Put these facts down on paper. Next, judge which of these facts are useful to you. Then imagine, think of new ways to apply these in your daily life.

Absorb, recall, judge, and imagine. When you consciously use this formula for a while, it quickly becomes a habit. And, it's a habit you'll be pleased to have.

Back to top

## The Power In Asking Questions

Creative people are invariably intelligent people and they're curious about themselves, those around them, and the world in which they live. This is the kind of curiosity that's been called one of the permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect.

Questions are the creative acts of the intelligent. And the questions that work hardest for us and bring us the greatest amount of useful information are the open-ended questions. Now these questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no, they're asked by using the six W's, H, and I technique; who, what, when, where, why, which, how, and if.

Rudyard Kipling put it this way:

"I had six honest serving men. They taught me all I knew. Their names were where and what and when and why and how and who." All we're doing is adding two more, which and if.

Now, this isn't entirely new to us. We employ the six W's, H, and I all the time when we were children. Have you ever tried to count the number of times each day a four or five year old uses the word why?

You see, each question a child asks is an attempt to add to his limited knowledge. When adults lose patience with this constant barrage of questions, the child either finds some other way of getting the information or just forgets the whole thing, thereby neglecting a valuable tool he'll want later in life, the open ended question.

Now, as adults, we know that inside the mind of each person we meet there is some knowledge that could benefit us if only we could learn what it is. The open-ended question technique really opens people up.

By asking open-ended questions, we get people to lose the barriers that normally keep this information out of our grasp. Human beings like to talk about things that interest them. Open-ended questions let people know we want to hear their ideas, opinions and thoughts.

Each of us has two ears and one mouth and it seems to be a good idea to do twice as much listening as talking. An old Texas friend of mine used to say "you ain't learning nothing while you're talking."

But the object of asking open-ended questions isn't merely to get other people to talk. We can spend days standing around gabbing with people who have very little to say that would benefit us. Instead, the object of our who, what, when,

where, why, which, how, and if questions is to gather, absorb, and utilize that information which will be useful to us, move us ahead in the fields of our own interests and endeavors.

But in so doing, we're also employing the best technique known for making friends, for success in human relations, and for selling our own ideas. Oddly enough, the more we listen, the better conversationalists we seem to the person doing the talking.

One of this country's top newsmen set an example of this kind of purposeful questioning. He knew how to ask open-ended questions so provocatively that he could almost always get world leaders to give him exclusive interviews. His questions earned him the highest position in his field; that of chief executive for one of the great news services.

And, the open-ended question is equally useful for the businessman. Suppose, for instance, you just met a Mr. Smith who's an official of the company operating in an area different from your own. Instead of talking about the weather, you might ask him, "Mr. Smith how did you get into your line of work?" Here's a man who obviously has some degree of success in business. So, you stand an excellent chance of learning something that'll be useful to you.

One of the best salesmen I know uses open-ended questions to a great advantage when he's talking to a prospect. Instead of saying we make the best thingamabob in the world, he asks Mr. Prospect, when you buy a thingamabobs, what features are most important for you.

Here's an effective method for taking people off the offensive, by getting them to talk to your advantage. This technique works well for anyone who'll give some thought to what he's going to say rather than just blurting out the first thing that pops into his mind. So, ask skillfully probing open-ended questions and ask them in a sincere, courteous manner.

Anyone who uses these six W's, H, and I technique wisely, courteously, and with those people who can contribute something to his understanding, will quickly find this to be one of his most useful creative techniques.

The best way I know to practice asking open-ended questions is to try out a few on myself. If this sounds like a good idea, you might want to try it too. Ask yourself who has a greater knowledge of my job than I? What can I do to learn some of the things he knows that I don't? Why must my job be done this way? And, if there is a better way to do my job, what would it be?

The housewife and the student can make up a similar set of questions that would be just as stimulating in their own fields. Take time to ponder these questions. They're answers, the facts, and information you'll gain can make your life more interesting and rewarding. And, whenever you talk with others, use lots of open-ended questions. They're your most valuable creative tools.

Back to top

## New Ways to Think

Up to this point we've been preparing ourselves to think more creatively, first by recognizing how important our ability to think creatively really is. Second by looking at the characteristics creative people have in common and examining ourselves in the light of these. Third, by understanding more about the functions of the marvelous mind by which we're all equipped, and fourth by studying the art of gathering information, asking questions, and listening.

Now we're ready to examine the best techniques for using our creative faculties more effectively to solve problems, make decisions, achieve goals, and better fulfill our ultimate responsibility as human beings, to think.

Have you ever considered that you can think in various ways? Let's look at some ways to think. First, think association. An example of thinking association is that the best way to remember names is to associate them with familiar objects and words.

Two more examples of the thinking association are the keyword of the association lists techniques. The keyword technique is used by people who want to remember a series of ideas. They join the initial letters of the idea words together to form a simple keyword. By remembering the keyword they can recall the whole series of ideas.

An association list is used by memory experts to recall prodigious lists of articles by associating each one with another article in a previously memorized list. The creative person is forever associating ideas and continually searching for associative relationships.

Next, think combination. Almost everything in nature is a combination of elements. You're quite a combination yourself. Scientists calculate that if the energy in the hydrogen atoms of your body could be utilized, you could supply all the electrical needs for the entire country for nearly a week. A DuPont Scientist says that the atoms of your body contain a potential energy of more than 11 million kilowatt hours per pound. Each of us then, by this estimate, is worth about 85 billion dollars, give or take a few million.

A simple pencil is a combination of wood, carbon, rubber, paint, metal. Consider the combination of things that make up ham and eggs, pie alamode, radio, TV, record player combinations and orbiting satellites combined with microwave telephone relay stations. Somebody dreamed up the idea of combining comedy and music and musical comedy was born.

You can come up with some really great ideas by finding new combinations yourself. Everything you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell during the day offers opportunity to consider new combinations. When you brush your teeth, you might think of a toothbrush that contains the toothpaste in the handle. You might combine your mirror with a motto reminding you to start the day right. It might read how can I increase my service today or today is the only time I've got, I'll use it well. So let's think combination.

Next, think adaptation. Burlap fabric originally used for making gunnysacks has been adapted for drapes, wall covering, and stylish dresses. Some salesmen were thinking adaptation. Airplane seatbelts have been adapted for use in automobiles to bring more safety to highway driving. The phonograph record and motion picture, originally developed for entertainment, are today adapted for instruction and education.

Rocket motors, which were developed to propel atomic missiles, have been adapted to lift peaceful space vehicles into orbital and into planetary flight. During the next year, you're going to see the result of people thinking adaptation and coming up with ideas worth thousands of dollars. Why couldn't one of these people be you? The only limit to what you can achieve by adapting old products to new uses, old methods to new applications is the limit of your own creativity.

Next, think substitution. When you think substitution, you ask yourself how you might substitute a different material or thing for the one now used. For example, plastic is used for a substitute for wood and metal. Aluminum is a substitute for other metals. Stainless steel is often substituted for chrome. The transistor often replaces the vacuum tube. Old weathered planking can be used as a substitute for a conventional wall in a family room or study with dramatic and interesting effect.

In short, don't assume that, because a particular thing has always been used in the past that you have to use it now. Perhaps there's a substitute that will work better or last longer or cost less or be lighter or more colorful and so forth. Let's think substitution.

Next, think magnification. Think big. Example, skyscrapers, the Pentagon, king size soft drinks, giant economy size packages. What do you work with that might be made larger? Or, think mini-fication. Think small. Examples like the solar battery, the transistor, the compact car, tiny radios that fit into your pocket, small portable TV sets and smaller size food products. How about the bikini? That's certainly thinking small.

And now, to keep your mind moving, think rearrangement. That is, turn things around, backward, upside down, or inside out. An interesting example of this is when someone came up with the idea of putting the mink on the inside of a woman's coat, all the warmth, luxury, and status of full length mink in a casual coat. And it's nothing more than a mink coat turned inside out.

Another good example of this is the building with its skeletal framework outside. The building is suspended inside. Insects have their skeletons outside. We have ours inside. They both work fine.

What do you work with that can benefit from this kind of thinking? What can you turn around, revolutionize? Rearrange things, change pace, alter sequence, think of modifying, changing color, motion, timing, sound, odor, taste, form and shape.

This type of thinking works for everyone. Salesmen use these creative techniques to discover new application for products or services, new ways of emphasizing customer benefits, new ideas to solve customer problems, better ways to organize their time and effort.

Summing up, if you want to spur your mind into new action, think combination, association, adaptation, substitution, magnification, mini-fication, and rearrangement.

If, at first, you force, literally force, your mind into thinking all of these seven ways, you'd probably be amazed with the ideas you developed. And before long, you'll find yourself thinking in each of these ways as a matter of course.

This kind of thinking increases the scope of your mind power. It enables you to achieve full use of your brain. Your mind has an infinite variety of things it can do and an infinite capacity for work. Let it work for you. Take nothing for granted. Everything can and will be changed, improved. The only thing you can count on for certain is change. Don't wait for it. Be in the forefront. Help bring it about.

Back to top

## Creative Problem Solving

What are the similarities in problem solving, decision-making, and goal achievement?

Naturally, they are alike in many ways. A decision that must be made is little more than a problem awaiting a solution. We might even call it a simple problem. When we're faced with a decision, we rarely have to choose between more than three alternatives. Whereas, in solving a problem, we sometimes face what seems to be an endless list of possibilities.

And, what about goal achievement? Isn't a goal a point we wish to reach? The problem is to move from where we are now to where we want to be. So, you see, problem solving, decision-making, and goal achievement are all closely related functions of creative thinking. It's important that we keep this in mind.

The first step in solving any problem is to define it. A problem well stated is a problem half-solved. Define the problem clearly. We should always be sure we understand the problem before we go to work on its solution.

Now write down everything you know about the problem. This information might come from your own experience or from books that contain background and statistical data or from friends and business associates who know something about the area in which the problem lies.

Third, who to see. List the names of people and organizations that are recognized authorities on the problem. This is your opportunity to go all out for facts.

After determining who can help you, contact them, talk with them, pick their brains for all the information they possess that can help you solve the problem. After doing this write down the additional facts and information you have now obtained. Be sure to make a note of each thing that is germane to the problem. Don't risk forgetting anything that could help you find the best solution.

The fifth step in solving a problem creatively is called individual ideation. This is personal brainstorming, thinking with the brakes of judgment off. Don't try to decide whether an idea is good or bad. Just write it down the moment it comes to you. You can pick and choose and rate these ideas later. Right now, all you're after is a lot of ideas.

Now here are the four rules for brainstorming.

One: No negative thinking.

Two: The wilder the ideas, the better.

Three: A large number of ideas is essential.

And Four: Combination and improvement of ideas is what you're after.

One idea often leads to a better idea. Don't worry if some of your ideas seem far fetched or impractical. You're looking for all the ideas you can possibly find. Don't reject any. Write them all down.

Then when you have all your ideas written down, rate them for effectiveness and facility. The effectiveness scale ranges from very effective to probably effective to doubtful. And, the facility scale ranges from easy to not so easy to difficult. This rating of ideas will clearly indicate the likely success of any possible solution. Of course, it's best to consider first the idea or ideas that are rated both very effective and easy.

The next step in your creative process for solving problems is the group brainstorm. This is your opportunity to put the minds of others to work on the problem. Handle this session the same way you did your individual ideation, no negative thinking and no criticism at this stage. The wilder the ideas, the better. Get as many ideas as possible and try for idea combination and improvement.

Write down all the ideas the group comes up with. Then, after all the possible solutions are in, screen them as you did earlier for their predictable effectiveness and ease of implementation. Be careful, though, not to pass judgment on any idea while the brainstorm is in progress. It's sure death to brainstorming. The rating always comes last. We'll go into this more thoroughly later.

Of course, you may not want group brainstorming on every problem. If you don't, just skip this step and go on to the next one.

Seventh, list only ideas that have received the highest ratings. Then, estimate the time and cost involved in implementing each of these ideas. When you've found the ones that check out best for effectiveness, facility, time, and cost put them on a page named "Action Plan". This is your schedule for putting the best ideas to work.

When you review an idea in your action plan, decide who might do it, when it might be done, where it will start, and how to do it. These are important considerations. Be certain to give yourself a deadline for putting your plan into action. We work hardest and most efficiently when we know there's a definite time element involved. So, make a note of the date when you must put your solution to work.

It's good to remember that timing is often critical when a new idea is introduced. So, carefully calculate the deadline date in the light of the general situation. You

also might like to write down a second date, the one by which you intend to have the action completed, the problem solved.

Remember what we wrote earlier about problem solving, decision-making, and goal achievement? They have a great deal in common. They can all be attacked in much the same way. And, you'll find your worksheet a real help. Step by step it can take you through to the successful solution of any problem.

You know, for any problem, no matter how big or complex it may be, there is a solution. All you have to do is find it. And, you can find it by organizing your approach, by attacking the problem emphatically with determination, by working long and hard, by applying your full brain power and by using wisely all the help you can get. You CAN solve it!

Back to top

## The Brainstorm

I've talked about two kinds of brainstorming, individual ideation, a person thinking up solutions on his own, and, group brainstorming, a number of people working together on a problem. Now, I'd like to explore each of these techniques and go into them in greater depth.

But first, consider for just a moment the middle ground between these two. This is a situation in which two people work together in creative collaboration and idea improvement. There are many good examples of this, ranging from Madam Curie and her husband to Rogers and Hammerstein. This team of two technique often works on the sparkplug and brake system. One half of the team may be the thinker upper and the other half the toner downer, the judge.

So, that's the middle ground, the team of two technique. It's productive. And I recommend you use it whenever you can. You might ask your wife or husband, business associate or a good friend to be the other half of the team.

This kind of collaboration is a good way to prove the old saying that two heads are better than one. In this middle ground example, the team of two technique, I mentioned that one collaborator frequently acted as the thinker upper, the spark plug, the other as the toner downer, the brake.

This is not brainstorming. In brainstorming, there are only thinker uppers, only sparkplugs. There are no toner downers, no brakes, no critics, no judges until all the ideas are in. Now let's get back to the solo method of brainstorming, the one we'll call individual ideation.

As I said previously, your first step toward the solution of any problem is to define it clearly. The definition should be as succinct and simply put as you can possibly make it. I suggest that you think about your problem until it's nature and limits are so clear in your mind that you can easily write down the complete problem in one simple statement. A good working definition gives you a clear target.

After your problem is well defined, you can then start your own personal solitary brainstorm, your individual ideation. Come up with and write down as many ideas, as many possible solutions, as you can think of. This may not be easy at first, very few things are the first time you try them. But, it can be done. It takes enthusiasm, concentration, and perseverance to find the best ideas to solve a problem.

When you start getting some ideas down on that sheet of paper you'll find these ideas will enable you to come up with more. They, in turn, will generate still

more ideas. This is the kind of chain reaction that really gets things going creatively.

Remember, you're striving now only for a quantity of ideas. Don't worry about quality, that'll come later. In fact, the development of quality is inevitable. Your best ideas seldom come first. So, don't hold back. Go all out and keep going just as a navigator increases his chances of hitting his target with every additional bearing he takes. So do a large number of ideas increase the odds in favor of your hitting upon the best solution to a problem.

Strive for variety in your ideas. When you've put down as many as you can think of, try asking yourself, all right, what's next? The French Novelist Stendhal stated the case for quantity over a century ago when he said, "I require three or four cubic feet of new ideas a day as a steamboat requires coal." So, try anything and everything and be sure to write down every idea you get.

One of this country's most imaginative inventors, Charles Kettering, worked for six years developing his new diesel engine. He tried first one approach and then another until, as he said, the engine finally told us exactly what it wanted.

In the same way, your problems may very likely pick their own best solutions if you'll just give them enough choices and a large enough quantity and variety of ideas. Well, that's individual ideation, your own private brainstorm.

Let's move now to group brainstorming. This is a technique in which a number of people hold a meeting with a single purpose in mind, to think up together as many ideas as possible in order to solve one well-defined problem.

Between five and ten participants seems to be the best size for such a gathering. It's a good idea to let each member of the brainstorm know, in advance of the session, the problem to be worked on. Be sure they have as clear a written statement of the problem as you can possibly provide. Knowing the problem, each of them can spend from a few minutes to a few days in personal research and individual ideation before the meeting.

When the brainstorm group gathers, make sure each member has a pad and pencil with which to capture ideas he might otherwise lose before he gets a chance to present them to the group. Have someone present to take notes to record every idea that's produced. Later, these notes should be transcribed and passed along to the brainstormers for further improvement and combination of the ideas. Always have a leader, but keep the brainstorm as informal as possible. Encourage everyone to speak up.

Before starting, it’s helpful to run briefly through the four rules for brainstorming.

1) No negative thinking allowed. The wilder the ideas the better.

2) Suspend judgment, the ideas will be judged afterward.

3) You want the largest possible quantity of ideas.

4) Combination and improvement of ideas is what you’re after.

Then, let the storming begin. Attack the problem from all sides and without letup. You’ll find that there’s a chain reaction that takes place when the ideas start flowing, like a string of firecrackers going off one right after the other. It isn’t unusual for ten people to come up with a hundred ideas in half an hour. So, expect results.

Studies of the brainstorm technique show that a given number of people working together on a single problem will be more than 50 percent more effective -- coming up with at least half again more ideas than the same number of people working individually.

Along with the chain reaction, one idea leading to another, there’s a friendly rivalry and personal interaction that increases individual performance in a brainstorming session.

Well, there they are two excellent methods for finding the best solution to a problem: individual ideation and group brainstorming. Both are based on the amazingly simple procedure of thinking things up, writing them down, improving them, and judging them only after all the ideas are in.

The secret of this system’s effectiveness lies in the number of ideas it generates. Thomas Edison said, “I’ll try anything, I’ll even try Limburger cheese.” So, try anything, try everything, and write it all down. That’s brainstorming and it gets results.

Back to top

## Ready for Action

We've now covered steps one through six. We've defined the problem. We've searched out and rounded up the facts of the problem. We've learned how to individually ideate. And, we talked about using the technique of differed judgment in both individual ideation and group brainstorming.

Now, after coming up with ideas on how to solve the problem, we need to evaluate these ideas and take action on them. Too often we tend to underemphasize these two final steps, evaluation and action. Yet, they're vital steps in creativity.

Ideas need to be rated carefully before they can be implemented. There are many scales we can use. Among the most useful are effectiveness and facility. First, how effective a solution to a problem the idea is likely to be and second, how easy or how difficult it might be to put the idea into action.

So, after looking over all your ideas, first rate them according to how effective you can reasonably expect them to be: very effective, probably effective, or doubtful. Then, rate them for facility or ease of implementation: easy, not so easy, or difficult.

Effectiveness and facility make a good two-way screen for the brainstorm ideas. Remember, you're now judging the ideas. This is a time for cold hard thinking. Suppose you're a manufacturer, and suppose your sales and marketing team brainstorm come up with some ideas to increase sales. Let's say one of the ideas is to revamp completely one of the products that your company is offering to the public.

Let's rate this idea. First, in terms of effectiveness, you know the present product meets a need and is acceptable to the buying public. What about an entirely changed product? Without a lot of marketing tests and then a period of actually manufacturing for sale, it would be hard to say just how effective this would be in increasing sales. Better rate it doubtful.

And how does this idea of completely revamping one of the products check out on the facility screen: easy, not so easy, or difficult? It would be difficult. Wouldn't it? It would require new engineering, new tools, new manufacturing plans, new packaging and new marketing methods.

Suppose, however, that one of the salesmen's ideas is to feature the company's product on a network television program. This would be probably effective, it would be not so easy, but it could be done. Now, suppose another idea is to set

up a new motivational or a sales incentive program, a program direct to those people who are at the front of the problem, the salesmen.

If it were a well-designed or implemented motivational or incentive program, it would stand a good chance of being very effective. It would be easy to do. It should increase the company's sales.

There are many other evaluation yardsticks you might use. Two more are time and money. Try rating your ideas against these measurements. For example, in the case of the manufacturer who wants to increase his sales, certainly, changing the product would take a great deal of time and money. And to advertise it on a popular network television program would cost a great deal of money.

On the other hand, to introduce a new motivational or sales incentive program might be neither too costly nor too time consuming. So, when you evaluate your ideas, measure them against these four rating yardsticks, effectiveness, facility, time and cost.

Every idea you have may not be worth creative action. And, that's why you must skillfully evaluate each of them. But, once you've carefully judged your ideas it's time to take action. Now, let's look at ways to act on your ideas.

This action step seems to be one of the most difficult. It requires hard work and most of us don't like hard work. But, rewards can't come without action.

Here's an example. Several years ago, one of the telephone companies had a major problem. It was how to prevent ice from forming on communication wires and breaking them. For months then engineers worked hard on the problem. Finally, they decided to brainstorm it.

During the brainstorm, one idea was to fly helicopters at a low altitude over the wires; the down draft from the rotors would blow away the ice. The idea was tried, it was put into action, and it worked. The result, no more ice on wires and thousands of dollars saved.

Now, let's create an Action Plan. First, you select or list the ideas or idea you plan to act upon. Second, you decide who might take the action, for example, your boss, your general manager, sales manager, advertising manager or yourself.

Third, you determine when is the best time to take action. Timing is a critical factor in the introduction of a new idea. Wrong timing might short circuit an idea and cause its failure. So, watch the timing of your idea's introduction. We can all think of past great ideas that flopped because of bad timing.

Fourth, decide where the action might be taken, for example, in your office, in a factory, at the next board of directors meeting. The staging is important. So, pay attention to exactly where the idea is introduced.

Fifth, you need to determine how the idea might be implemented. For example, if it's a new way to increase sales, perhaps direct mail might be used or advertising in newspapers or perhaps radio and TV might be the way to get the idea across.

Sixth and finally, always give yourself two deadlines. First, a date on which you want to start putting your idea into action and second a date by which you want to complete the action, have the problem solved. Deadlines spur the mind to creative action.

Too often most of us fail to do anything with our ideas. One reason is that we fear failure. Here I think it's well to remember that mistakes are often stepping stones to success. Success never crowns those afraid to try. The point is that, to be productive, ideas must be implemented. Weigh carefully the idea you plan to put into action. Plan how you'll take the action. Then, take action.

Back to top

## The Creative Person

We've found that creative people, though they may be dissimilar in many respects, have certain attitudes and employ certain techniques to their own benefit and to the benefit of us all.

I'd like now to use these techniques and attitudes as the basis for a descriptive sketch of a creative person. As we go through this sketch, I'd like you to think about this person. Where and when have you seen him or her? Is this a person you know at work or in your neighborhood or right at home?

It will be helpful to read this description frequently and be reminded of these techniques and attitudes, which, if practiced regularly, will result in your living an even more creative rewarding life. Another good idea is project the image of the creative person on your own actions and then judge for yourself what areas could stand some improvement.

First of all, the creative person realizes that his mind is an inexhaustible storehouse. It can provide anything he earnestly wants in life. But, in order to draw from this storehouse, he must constantly augment its stock of information, thoughts and wisdom. His mind gives him ideas and ideas solve problems.

The person we're talking about has a carefully thought out and clearly defined set of goals toward which he's working. By knowing where he's going and determining to get there, he gives meaning and purpose to his daily work, to everything he does. He never wastes time just drifting. He's always in control of his life.

The creative person knows his brain thrives on exercise. So, he uses a part of each day for thinking imaginatively about three things, himself, his work, and his fellow man. By asking himself questions involving these three areas, he's prospecting in the riches goldmine ever known. And the answers to his questions are often ideas that he can put into immediate action.

He reaches out for ideas. He respects the minds of others, gives credit to their mental abilities. Everyone has ideas, they're free, and many of them are excellent.

By first listening to ideas and then thinking them through before judging them, the creative person avoids prejudice and closed mindedness. This is the way he maintains a creative climate around himself.

You know, ideas are like slippery fish. They seem to have a peculiar knack of getting away from us. Because of this, the creative person always has a pad and pencil handy. When he gets an idea, he writes it down. He knows that many

people have found their whole lives changed by a single great thought. By capturing ideas immediately, he doesn't risk forgetting them.

And these captured ideas are deposited in idea banks, eight and a half by eleven inch envelopes which are labeled with topics of interest. A friend of mine, a very successful writer, writes his books this way. He labels each envelope with a name of a chapter. Then, whenever he gets an idea or finds new material, he sees that it gets into the proper envelope. Before long his book has practically written itself.

Having a sincere interest in people, our creative person listens carefully when someone else is talking. He's intensely observant; absorbing everything he sees and hears. He behaves as if everyone he meets wears a sign that reads, "I am the most important person on earth." Thus, he makes it a point always to talk with other people's interest in mind. And then, it pays off in a flood of new ideas and information that would otherwise be lost to him forever.

Widening his circle of friends and broadening his base of knowledge are two more very effective techniques of the creative person. If he is staying at a hotel where there is a convention not allied to his own work, he'll drop in on it, make new friends, and listen for ideas that might help him. He's always looking for better ways to do his work and live his life.

The creative person anticipates achievement. He expects to win. And the above average production intended for this type of attitude affects those around him in a positive way. He's a prospector for all who know him.

You know, problems are challenges to creative minds. Without problems, there'd be little reason to think at all. Welcoming them as normal and predictable parts of living singles him out as an above average person. He knows it's a waste of time merely to worry about problems. So, he wisely invests the same time and energy in solving problems.

He has an organized approach to problem solving. He can even avoid problems by anticipating potentially troublesome areas and doing something about them before they turn sour on him. The research and development departments in many leading companies are constantly involved in exactly this sort of advanced planning.

The creative person knows the value of giving himself and his ideas away. He's a go-giver as well as a go-getter. The hand that gives always gathers. And doing things for other people is a vital part of his way of life.

When the creative person gets an idea he puts it through a series of steps designed to improve it. He thinks in new directions. He builds big ideas and little ones, new ideas and old ones, associating ideas, combining them, adapting, substituting, magnifying, minifying, rearranging and reversing ideas.

He steers clear of mind weakeners, noise, fatigue, needless worry, unbalanced diets, overindulgence in food or drink, and people with negative attitudes. He asks polite, probing questions that bolster the ego and expand the mind. Questions are the creative acts of the intelligent and he uses them often and to everyone's advantage.

And, the creative person uses his spare time wisely. He knows that many of the great ideas, books, and inventions were conceived during the creator's spare time. We all have the same number of minutes in a day. And, the creative person values each one of them.

Do you recognize the person in this message? Well, it's someone you ought to know. As you use these suggestions and creativity aids you've learned to further increase your personal potential, I believe you'll soon discover this person's identity and you'll be pleased with your own enhanced ability.

Back to top

## The Challenge of Creativity

Now, with your interest in mind, I'd like to get down to a few personal thoughts on creative thinking. Creative thinkers have been around longer than teachers of creative thinking or even those who would define it. In fact, by definition, creative thinking seems to divide itself into two areas: hard work and inspiration.

You've had the experience of working long and hard on a problem without any real results. And then, all of the sudden the solution hits you. It's like someone turning on a bright light. But this wonderful experience almost never comes without our first preparing the way. And that's where the hard work comes in.

Those who give up in frustration simply fail to understand that this is the way the mind operates. It's the methodical striving that makes possible the illuminating flash of insight. Everyone can be creative. But, it seems that only a few know they can or realize the success and satisfaction that come as a result of being more imaginative and more energetic in their thoughts and action.

We have a tendency to go along, a tendency not to question something once it's been established as satisfactory. Let's find an example. Here's a down to earth one. How do you scramble eggs at your house? Have you ever tried mixing a dash or two of bitters in with your raw eggs, maybe a couple of good squirts of Tabasco sauce? Or, first sautéing some chopped onions or green peppers then pouring in the beaten eggs and just before they're done adding diced fresh tomatoes? This makes fixing scrambled eggs more interesting and it makes eating them a great deal more satisfying.

Now, if this kind of thinking can change cooking from a laborious chore into a creative rewarding art, think what it can do in countless other fields of endeavor including your own.

Just as I challenge the way you scramble eggs, challenge, at least in the back of your mind, everything that you're doing as you used to do it, or as your mother or father or great-great grandfather used to do it. Most people today agree that the once fervently spoken line "what was good enough for my father is good enough for me," was a fatuous absurd remark.

What was good enough for dad is not good enough for us today. And, what's good enough for us won't be good enough for our youngsters. That's the way this old world improves itself and that's the way it should be.

A leading businessman has said if you're doing anything this year the same way you did it last year, you're in serious trouble. The trouble might not come from

the way you're doing things, but it very likely will come unless you maintain a constant awareness of the necessity, the inevitability of change.

In this book, I've given you the creative thinking methods developed by the best minds in this field. Creative thinking is a learnable skill and a practical art. But creative thinking in its very nature resists perfect definition and rigid rules of conduct, as does music or painting or any other art.

Becoming accomplished at any art takes practice and more practice, years of it. You can start practicing it right now. You can make it one of your most valuable assets now and from here on out. And, if you'll continue to practice it every day of your life, you'll become a master at it and win a master's reward.

Maybe it doesn't make any difference if you still lace your shoes the way you've always laced them. But, it does make a difference if you don't challenge the way you lace them or why you lace them. Just such a challenge changed the shoe industry and today a good many of men's shoes are made with no laces at all.

So, form the habit of really thinking about, of questioning everything you do, everything you see. Some people can walk by an empty lot for years without giving it a second thought, without really seeing it at all. But, one man will see it not as a vacant lot but as a beautifully landscaped property sporting a handsome new office building. He'll do something worthwhile for his community and probably make himself a fine profit in real estate.

When you ask yourself why the steering wheel on your car is round, it's not necessarily because you want to invent a square one. It's because you're practicing your art, the art of creative thinking. You're sharpening your mind and encouraging it to perform the highest function a human being is capable of, deliberate creative thought.

Then when you apply your art to your work, to your home, and family, and friends, your mind flashes out of its scabbard like a finely tempered steel blade probing, seeking, penetrating through the old to the new that lies just under the surface.

Creative thinking is an exciting pursuit. It's exhilarating and it makes for a wonderful conversation at the dinner table, while riding in a car, anytime.

In the evening, your creative awareness might result in you asking yourself why am I sitting here like I mesmerized chicken watching people kill each other on my television screen? Isn't there something more interesting, more rewarding I could be doing with a part of this time? Isn't there a subject I'd like to know more about? What about that book I've been meaning to read?

You know, one hour a night adds up quickly to a really enormous amount of time. Time is one of the few things men can't buy more of and it's a good idea to use all of it as wisely as we know how.

When you get an idea you think is good, hang it up on an imaginary hook and walk all the way around it. Look at it from every angle, poke it, pull it, twist it, stretch it in new directions, try to improve it. If it's an idea you can't use, give it away and get another you can work with. Ideas are free yet they're the most valuable commodities known to man. And the great ideas ennoble the minds that conceive them.

Make creative thinking a normal part of your life and attitude and you'll find your world being filled to the brim with a wonderful new interest. And, one of these days, you're going to get the idea that will make a really substantial contribution, one that will revolutionize your life, for it will be an idea that will make the world a better place because you happened to live here for a while.

In the meantime, just looking for that idea can be a challenge, an inspiration, and a lot of fun. Good hunting and good creative thinking.

This is Earl Nightingale and thank you.

Back to top

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